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ABSTRACT

This study investigated students' attitudes toward their counselors in a small midwestern high school. Various groups in the high school were identified and their attitudes compared. Attitudes were obtained in the areas of personal, vocational, and educational counseling. The data was obtained by administering an opinionaire to the freshmen and seniors in the high school. The major finding of this study was that in general most groups held the same attitudes toward their counselor. Concerning personal counseling, most groups agreed that their counselor understood them, was interested in their welfare, and was not too busy to listen to them. Most groups also felt that they could communicate with their counselor and would rather not have a different counselor. Whether the counselor was thought of as a disciplinarian or lacked empathy, or whether it was feared he might put damaging information in students' records was not measured by this stdy. It was suggested that another study would have to be done to find these answers. (Author/BW)

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A STUDY OF THE ATTITUDES OF STUDENTS TOWARD THEIR COUNSELORS

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Purpose and Procedure

The high school counselor has various roles in the school setting. Three of these are his roles in personal counseling, vocational counseling, and educational counseling. There have been studies on the roles and functions of counselors (1,4,5) and on students' attitudes toward their counselors (2,3,6,7). The purpose of this research was to determine students' attitudes toward their counselors in a small high school west of Chicago. Various groups in the high school were identified and their attitudes compared. Attitudes were obtained in the areas of personal, vocational, and educational counseling. No attempt was made in this study to evaluate the counseling program in this school or to determine any attitudes toward the counselors other than those of the students.

The data for this study was obtained by administering an opinionnaire to the freshmen and seniors in the high school. It was felt that these two groups would be most representative of the high school's attitudes. Since the school had no homerooms or mandatory study halls, the only opportunity to administer the opinionnaires was through the physical education classes. The sample included all freshmen and seniors attending their physical education classes on the day the survey was taken. Out of 130 freshmen, 117 were sampled, and out of 115 seniors, 59 were sampled.

The opinionnaire (see appendix) included three questions which enabled the students to be placed in various groups (see appendix, table 1). This made it possible to study the difference in various groups' attitudes toward their counselor. The opinionnaire also included 20 statements on which the students responded to a Likert scale of five responses (strongly agree-5,

agree-4, undecided-3, disagree-2, strongly disagree-1).

The data from these opinionnaires was then transferred to computer cards and run through a computer to obtain the needed information. A T-test or comparison of the means of each question was run for the groups male--female, freshman--senior, college--not college--undecided, and the 12 combinations of these. The data used from the computer was the means of each question for each group and the level of significance of difference between groups if either .05 or .01.

The community from which this sample was taken was a small rural community of about 4000 people, west of Chicago. The high school contained about 500 students with two counselors. A majority of the people in the community were middle class.

Results

The first groups which were compared were male and female. Of the 117 freshmen, 47 were male and 70 were female. Of the 59 seniors, 32 were male and 27 were female. The males' and females' attitudes seemed to be very similar. On only two questions was there a difference with a level of significance of .05 or .01. Both groups disagreed with the statement: "I would be opposed to seeking help from my counselor if I had a problem with a course." The males' mean was 2.54 and the females' mean was 2.05 (5 being strongly agree and 1 being strongly disagree). Although both groups answered in the same direction, the females' mean was significantly different at the .05 level (95 times out of 100). Both groups agreed that they could obtain any information they might need about their planned vocation from their counselor but the females' mean of 3.97 was significantly higher at the .01

level than the males' mean of 3.58. These were the only two questions out of the 20 for which the male and female means were significantly different and even these two questions were answered in the same direction.

Although both groups felt that their counselor understood them, was interested in their welfare, and was not too busy to listen to them and could be communicated with; and further disagreed that they wished they had a different counselor, they would not go to their counselor with a personal problem. Concerning vocational counseling, both groups felt that they should be required to see their counselor about their career and felt that they could obtain any information they might need about their career from their counselor. They did not wish they had seen him more often and would not rather talk to someone else. Although they felt he had been helpful in choosing courses for their planned career, they did not feel he had been helpful in planning their career. Educationally, both groups thought that seeing their counselor about a course selection should be voluntary. They would seek help from their counselor if they had a problem with a course or a teacher but not if they had a problem with their school work. Both groups would rather talk to a female counselor.

The next two groups which were compared were the freshmen and seniors. These two groups differed significantly in their attitudes on 10 of the 20 statements. Both groups agreed that their counselor understands them but the freshmen with a mean of 3.46 agreed more than the seniors with a mean of 3.10 at the level of significance of .05. Again both groups felt that their counselor was interested in their welfare, was not too busy to listen to their problems, did not take a personal interest in them, and could communicate with them. The seniors with a mean of 2.12 disagreed more than the freshmen with a

mean of 2.54 to the statement that they would go to their counselor with a personal problem. The level of significance was .05. Also, the seniors with a mean of 4.09 agreed more than the freshmen with a mean of 3.56 that they would rather seek help from someone else on a personal problem. The level of significance here was .01.

The freshmen and seniors felt that they could obtain any information they might need about their career from their counselor and that they should be required to see their counselor about their career. Although they felt their counselor had been helpful in choosing courses for their planned career and they would not rather talk to someone else, neither group felt that their counselor had been helpful in planning a career. The seniors with a mean of 3.53 agreed that they had talked to their counselor about their career while the freshmen with a mean of 2.59 had not talked to their counselor. This difference was at the .01 level of significance. There was a difference at the .05 level of significance on the statement that they wish they had seen their counselor more often, the seniors agreeing with a mean of 3.15 and the freshmen disagreeing with a mean of 2.83.

The freshmen with a mean of 3.85 agreed that getting advice on course selection should be voluntary more than the seniors with a mean of 3.46 at a .05 level of significance. The seniors with a mean of 2.02 were more in favor of seeking help from their counselor if they had a problem with a course than the freshmen with a mean of 2.40 at the .05 level of significance. Both groups agreed that they would go to their counselor if they had a problem with a teacher but the freshmen, 3.90, agree more than the seniors, 2.46, at the .01 level of significance. Seniors, 3.31, would rather talk to someone other than their counselor if they were having trouble with their school work while the freshmen, 2.94, would rather talk to their counselor. There is an actual

difference at the .05 level of significance. Freshmen would rather talk to a female counselor but seniors would not. This is at the .05 level of significance.

A comparison was made among the means of those students planning on attending college, those not planning on attending college, and those who were undecided. It is questionable whether the undecided category is an accurate sampling since this was not an alternative on the opinionnaire, but some students wrote in undecided. There were undoubtedly some undecided students who were forced to answer yes or no. Out of the 176 students tested, 110 were planning on going to college, 53 were planning not to go to college, and 13 were undecided. In general, their attitudes are the same as the other groups looked at.

There was a significant difference at the .05 level on the statement my counselor understands me. Those who were going to college and those who were not going to college both felt that their counselor understood them while those who were undecided did not feel that their counselor understood them. Those students who were planning on attending college with a mean of 3.40, felt that their counselor was interested in their welfare while those who were not planning on attending college with a mean of 2.91 and those who were undecided with a mean of 2.92 felt that their counselor was not interested in their welfare. There was a difference at the .05 level of significance between those going and those not going to college. Those students planning on attending college had talked to their counselor about their career while those not planning on attending college and undecided, had not talked to their counselor about their career. There was a difference at the .01 level between those going to college with a mean of 3.09 and those not going to college with a mean of 2.50. Also

those going to college felt that their counselor had been helpful in choosing a career while those not going to college and undecided felt he had not been helpful. There was a difference at the .05 between those going to college with a mean of 3.32 and those not going with a mean of 2.89 and a difference at the .01 level between those going to college and those undecided with a mean of 2.46. There were other statements (five or them) for which there was a significant difference among these groups but the means were in the same direction as all the other groups discussed. Since there was only a difference in degree, these five statements will not be discussed.

All combinations of the groups already mentioned were compared forming 12 groups. There was a significant difference between many of the groups on many of the questions but only groups which answered different from the general trend are discussed. The level of significance was not studied but only the disagreeance with the other groups. Since the undecided groups were extremely small and not representative, they were not included in this section of the study. Considering personal counseling, the male seniors not going to college did feel that their counselor did take a personal interest in them. The female seniors going to college did not think that their counselor understood them. The male and female freshmen not going to college felt that their counselor was not interested in their welfare and these same males did not feel they could communicate with their counselor. No group thought their counselor was too busy to listen to them but no group would go to their counselor with a personal problem. Vocationally, the male and female seniors not going to college did not think they should be required to see their counselor about their career but the male and female seniors not going to college, along with male seniors going to college wished they had seen him

more often. The female freshmen and seniors going to college felt their counselor had been helpful in planning a career while only the male and female seniors going to college have talked to him about their career. The male and female seniors not going to college would rather talk to someone other than their counselor about their career. All groups felt they could obtain any information they might need about their career from their counselor. Educationally, only the male freshmen not going to college were opposed to seeking help from their counselor if they had a problem with a course. All groups would talk to their counselor if they had a problem with a teacher. All groups except male seniors not going to college and female seniors going to college would rather talk to a female counselor.

Summary

In this study of students' attitudes toward their counselor in a small high school west of Chicago, it was found in general most groups held the same attitudes toward their counselor. Concerning personal counseling, most groups agreed that their counselor understood them, was interested in their welfare, and was not too busy to listen to them. Most groups also felt that they could communicate with their counselor and would not rather have a different counselor. A couple of exceptions are the female freshmen not going to college who thought that their counselor was not interested in them and their welfare and the male freshmen not going to college who not only felt that their counselor was not interested in their welfare but also that they could not communicate with him. These two groups were small when considering the whole school, but they may be a group of people who need more help from their counselor. In spite of most groups' favorable attitudes

toward their counselor in regard to personal counseling, no group would go to him with a personal problem, but all groups would rather talk to someone else. The opinionnaire showed no apparent reason for this opposition to talking about a personal problem with their counselor. Whether the counselor was thought of as a disciplinarian or lacked empathy, or whether it was feared he might put damaging information in students' records is not measured by this study. Another study would have to be done to find the answers to these and other questions.

Concerning vocational counseling, again most groups agreed on their attitudes. Most felt they should be required to see their counselor about their career and felt they could obtain any information they might need about their career from him. The seniors wished thy had seen their counselor more often. Most groups would not rather talk to someone else about their career but the male and female seniors not going to college would rather talk to someone else. The female freshmen and seniors planning on going to college felt their counselor had been helpful to them in planning a career while most groups felt he had been helpful in choosing courses for a career but not in planning a career. Only the male and female seniors planning on attending college agreed that they had talked to their councelor about their career. In general, most groups felt that their counselor was prepared and qualified to help them in the area of vocational counseling but they just have not bothered to see him. The seniors planning on attending college had taken advantage of his services while the seniors not planning on attending college seemed reluctant to do so.

Concerning educational counseling, most groups believed that seeing their counselor about course selection should be voluntary. Although most

students would go to their counselor if they had a problem with a course or a teacher, they would not go to him if they had a problem with their school work. It was possible the students might have thought of school work as a more personal problem and a course as a scheduling problem. A problem with a teacher could have been thought of as the teacher's fault so therefore they would not be reluctant to talk about it. In general, the students felt their counselor was the right person to see about educational counseling and they bothered to see him.

Conclusions

1. Students felt that their counselor understood them and was interested in their welfare.

2. Students did not go to their counselor with personal problems.

3. Students felt that their counselor was qualified and willing to help them in the area of vocational counseling but only those seniors planning on going to college had actually sought help.

4. Students felt confident in seeking help from their counselor in the area of educational counseling.

5. Most students would rather talk to a female counselor.

6. Some groups, especially among those not going to college, did not seem to be reached by the counseling program.

Suggestions

If the same opinionnaire was used again, the category of undecided should be included as one of the responses for the question, are you going to college.

Why students did not go to their counselor with personal problems is an area that needs further research. Research on how to improve counselors in the area of personal counseling might be helpful.

Another area for further research is those students not going to college. A closer look at these students would be needed to determine if their counseling needs are being met.

Appendix

Table I Groups Compared in This Study and the Number of Students in Each Group

Group		Number
1.	Male	79
	Female	97
2.	Freshman	117
	Senior	59
3.	Going to college	110
	Not going to college	53
	Undecided	13
4.	Male, freshman, going to college	26
	Male, freshman, not going to college	19
	Male, freshman, undecided	2
	Male, senior, going to college	23
	Male, senior, not going to college	7
	Male, senior, undecided	2
	Female, freshman, going to college	43
	Female, freshman, not going to college	20
	Female, freshman, undecided	7
	Female, senior, going to college	18
	Female, senior, not going to college	7
	Female, senior, undecided	2

Table II Means, Standard Deviations, and Levels of Significance for the Attitudes of Males (1) and Females (2).

Question	Sex	Mean	Std. Dev.	Level of Signif.
4	1	3.33	0.96	
4	2	33.35	0.88	
5	1	2.37	1.05	
5	2	2.42	1.16	
6	1	3.32	1.33	
6	2	3.52	1.06	
7	1	3.72	1.18	
7	2	3.71	1.09	
8	1	3.10	1.12	
8	2	3.31	1.00	
9	1	2.60	1.19	
9	2	2.38	1.00	
10	1	2.50	1.33	.05
10	2	2.00	1.27	
11	1	2.58	1.17	
11	2	2.91	1.05	
12	1	2.68	1.12	
12	2	2.78	1.06	
13	1	3.13	1.17	
13	2	3.01	1.14	
14	1	2.76	1.12	
14	2	3.02	1.31	
15	1	2.42	1.21	
15	2	2.13	0.82	
16	1	2.97	1.04	
16	2	2.91	0.99	
17	1	3.11	1.17	
17	2	3.13	1.17	
18	1	3.62	1.21	
18	2	3.83	1.13	
19	1	3.41	1.08	
19	2	3.46	0.96	

Table II continued

Question	Sex	Mean	Std. Dev.	Level of Signif.
20	1	3.58	1.02	.01
20	2	3.97	0.80	
21	1	3.50	1.04	
21	2	3.88	1.06	
22	1	2.79	1.07	
22	2	2.55	0.96	
23	1	3.05	1.23	
23	2	3.31	1.18	

Table III Means, Standard Deviations, and Levels of Significance for the Attidues of Freshmen (1) and Seniors (2)

Question	Class	Mean	Std. Dev.	Level of Signif.
4	1	3.46	0.80	.05
4	2	3.10	1.08	
5	1	2.54	1.12	.05
5	2	2.12	1.05	
6	1	3.51	1.21	
6	2	3.28	1.17	
7	1	3.85	1.06	.05
7	2	3.46	1.22	
8	1	3.15	1.04	
8	2	3.36	1.08	
9	1	2.39	1.07	
9	2	2.64	1.13	
10	1	2.40	1.44	.05
10	2	2.02	0.99	
11	1	2.75	1.09	
11	2	2.78	1.18	
12	1	2.72	1.09	
12	2	2.78	1.08	
13	1	2.94	1.19	.05
13	2	3.31	1.04	
14	1	2.59	1.17	.01
14	2	3.53	1.10	
15	1	2.17	1.02	
15	2	2.43	0.99	
16	1	2.83	1.00	.05
16	2	3.15	1.01	
17	1	3.14	1.19	
17	2	3.10	1.12	
18	1	3.56	1.20	.01
18	2	4.09	1.01	
19	1	3.42	1.03	
19	2	3.46	0.99	

Table III continued

Question	Class	Mean	Std. Dev.	Level of Signif.
20	1	3.84	0.89	
20	2	3.71	0.98	
21	1	3.90	1.05	.01
21	2	3.46	1.02	
22	1	2.63	1.03	
22	2	2.71	0.98	
23	1	3.33	1.22	.05
23	2	2.92	1.12	

Table IV Means, Standard Deviations, and Levels of Significance, for those Students Going to College (1), Not Going To College (2), and Undecided About College (3)

Question	Group	Mean	Std. Dev.	Level of Signif.
4	1	3.35	0.94	1 and 3 .05
4	2	3.43	0.87	2 and 3 .05
4	3	2.85	0.80	
5	1	2.27	1.03	
5	2	2.66	1.24	
5	3	2.39	1.12	
6	1	3.40	1.26	
6	2	3.55	1.08	
6	3	3.23	1.09	
7	1	3.84	1.16	1 and 2 .05
7	2	3.44	1.04	
7	3	3.77	1.09	
8	1	3.40	0.95	1 and 2 .05
8	2	2.91	1.23	
8	3	2.92	0.86	
9	1	2.40	1.08	
9	2	2.53	1.17	
9	3	2.85	0.80	
10	1	2.07	1.22	1 and 2 .05
10	2	2.64	1.44	
10	3	2.46	1.27	
11	1	2.90	1.15	1 and 2 .05
11	2	2.53	1.10	
11	3	2.54	0.66	
12	1	2.75	1.07	
12	2	2.68	1.21	
12	3	2.85	0.55	
13	1	3.02	1.11	
13	2	3.15	1.26	
13	3	3.08	1.04	
14	1	3.09	1.22	1 and 2 .01
14	2	2.50	1.24	
14	3	2.92	0.95	

Table IV continued

Question	Group	Mean	Std. Dev.	Level of Signif.
15	1	2.22	0.99	
15	2	2.33	1.13	
15	3	2.31	0.75	
16	1	2.93	0.99	
16	2	2.92	1.10	
16	3	3.08	0.86	
17	1	3.32	1.13	1 and 2 .05
17	2	2.89	1.17	1 and 3 .01
17	3	2.46	1.05	
18	1	3.72	1.18	
18	2	3.74	1.16	
18	3	3.85	1.14	
19	1	3.56	0.94	
19	2	3.21	1.18	
19	3	3.31	0.75	
20	1	3.92	0.85	1 and 2 .05
20	2	3.55	1.05	
20	3	3.77	0.83	
21	1	3.72	1.06	
21	2	3.83	1.07	
21	3	3.70	1.10	
22	1	2.53	0.98	
22	2	3.83	1.12	1 and 3 .05
22	3	3.00	0.71	
23	1	3.13	1.23	
23	2	3.30	1.25	
23	3	3.31	0.63	

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OPINIONNAIRE

The purpose of this opinionnaire is to determine students' attitudes toward their counselors. Please answer the questions honestly.

Circle the correct response.

1. Male or Female
2. Freshman or Senior
3. Do you plan to go to college? Yes or No

The following statements represent opinions, and your agreement or disagreement will be determined on the basis of your particular beliefs. Please circle your position on the scale as the statement first impresses you. Indicate what you believe, rather than what you think you should believe.

SA = Strongly agree
A = Agree
U = Undecided
D = Disagree
SD = Strongly disagree

4. My counselor understands me.

SA A U D SD

5. I would go to my counselor with a personal problem.

SA A U D SD

6. Everyone should be required to see his counselor about his future job or career.

SA A U D SD

7. Getting advice from a counselor on course selection should be voluntary.

SA A U D SD

8. My counselor is interested in my welfare.

SA A U D SD

9. I wish I had a different counselor.

SA A U D SD

10. I would be opposed to seeking help from my counselor if I had a problem with a course.

SA A U D SD

11. My counselor has been helpful to me in planning a career or future job.

SA A U D SD

12. My counselor takes a personal interest in me.

SA A U D SD

13. If I were having trouble with my school work, I would rather talk to someone other than my counselor.

SA A U D SD

14. I have talked to my counselor about my career or future job.

SA A U D SD

15. My counselor is too busy to listen to my problems.

SA A U D SD

16. I wish I had seen my counselor more often.

SA A U D SD

17. My counselor has been helpful to me in choosing the courses I need to take for my planned vocation (career or job).

SA A U D SD

18. I would rather seek help from someone other than my counselor on a personal problem.

SA A U D SD

19. I can communicate with my counselor.

SA A U D SD

20. I can obtain any information I might need about my planned vocation (career or job) from my counselor.

SA A U D SD

21. I would go to my counselor if I had a problem with a teacher.

SA A U D SD

22. I would rather talk to someone other than my counselor about my vocation.

SA A U D SD

23. I would rather talk to a female counselor.

SA A U D SD